

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1775
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	ACLED
Titel:	Regional Overview: Middle East 17-23 September 2022
Udgivet:	29. september 2022
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	19. december 2022



Regional Overview: Middle East 17-23 September 2022

Posted: 29 September 2022 | **Region:** Middle East | **Category:** Regional Overviews

Last week in the [Middle East](#), political violence remained stable at high levels in Yemen, as the end of the UN-mediated truce on 2 October approaches with no report on a new extension.¹ In Iran, a wave of demonstrations erupted throughout the country following the death of a woman in police custody. In Syria, Israeli forces carried out airstrikes targeting regime forces and pro-Iran militias. Meanwhile, People's Protection Units (YPG) forces shelled a border military station in Turkey from within Syrian territory, killing a Turkish soldier. In Iraq, violence increased in Baghdad city and Thi Qar province, driven by violence involving unidentified militants and tribal militias, respectively. In Palestine, a Palestinian bystander was killed during clashes between Palestinian security forces and rioters, while Israeli security forces shot and killed a Palestinian after he carried out a stabbing attack against settlers. In Israel, a Palestinian attacked Israeli civilians before being killed by an off-duty Israeli police officer.

In **Yemen**, clashes between UAE-backed Security Belt forces and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) continued in Abyan governorate last week, as Security Belt forces attempted to oust AQAP militants from the Wadi Uman region in Mudiya district. Security Belt forces claim to have taken over AQAP's main camp, while AQAP claim that it forced some Security Belt forces to withdraw from the region ([South24, 18 September 2022](#); [An Nusra Media, 19 September 2022](#)). The Security Belt ground offensive was accompanied by reports of Saudi-led coalition airstrikes on AQAP targets last week, which represent the first recorded coalition strikes from fighter jets in Yemen since the UN-mediated truce began ([Al Mashhad Al Yemeni, 18 September 2022](#)). This campaign against AQAP contributes to the 275% increase in weekly violent events in Abyan in the past month relative to the weekly average for the preceding year flagged by [ACLED's Subnational Threat Tracker](#), which had warned of increased violence during the preceding four weeks.

Elsewhere in Yemen, drone strikes and shelling by anti-Houthi forces killed one Houthi fighter and injured four others in Az Zahir district of Al Bayda governorate, which borders the southern governorate of Lahij. Along with landmine incidents recorded in other areas of Al Bayda, this led to the 380% increase in violent events in the governorate over the past week relative to the weekly average for the preceding month, as flagged by [ACLED's Subnational Surge Tracker](#).

At the political level, the office of UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg did not issue any communication on developments related to the truce for the second consecutive week. However, ahead of the current truce expiration on 2 October, several meetings that focused on the truce and its renewal were held amid the UN General Assembly gathering in New York last week ([US Department of State, 19 September 2022](#); [US Department of State, 23 September 2022](#); [US Department of State, 23 September 2022](#)).

In **Iran**, the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman, triggered widespread unrest across the country last week, causing a notable spike in violence. Amini died while in the custody of the Guidance Patrol – also known as the 'morality police' – in Tehran after being arrested for violating compulsory veiling laws. Large numbers of women participated in the demonstrations, with many removing and burning headscarves and chanting anti-government slogans. Multiple demonstrations were violently suppressed by police and Basij forces, leading to clashes and acts of vandalism in several cities and dozens of reported fatalities. Amid the demonstrations, the state has shut down many internet services since Wednesday ([BBC, 22 September 2022](#)). The unrest contributed to a 957% increase in violent events in Iran over the past week relative to the weekly average for the preceding month, as flagged by [ACLED's Conflict Change Map](#). Demonstrations denouncing the death of Amini were also held in **Turkey** and **Lebanon**.

Last week in **Syria**, Israeli warplanes resumed airstrikes against regime forces and pro-Iran militia positions in Rural Damascus, killing five regime and pro-Iran militia fighters. Meanwhile, Islamic State attacks against regime forces and Syrian Democratic Forces decreased significantly last week after a brief surge the week prior. Violence against civilians also considerably declined last week compared with the week prior.



Meanwhile, YPG forces shelled across the Syrian-Turkish border into **Turkey**. On 18 September, YPG mortar shells hit the Esentepe border military station in Sanliurfa province, killing one Turkish soldier and injuring another. The YPG last shelled Turkish targets in Sanliurfa in [August](#).

In **Iraq**, violence increased in Baghdad city last week, driven by a spike in activity involving unidentified militants, including attacks targeting civilians and armed clashes between unidentified militants. The spike in violence contributes to the 169% increase in weekly violent events in Baghdad in the past month relative to the weekly average for the preceding year flagged by [ACLED's Subnational Threat Tracker](#), which warned of increased violence in Baghdad during the preceding four weeks.

Elsewhere, tribal militias engaged in armed clashes and violence against civilians in Thi Qar province. This violence contributes to the 400% increase in violent events in Thi Qar last week relative to the weekly average for the preceding month flagged by [ACLED's Subnational Surge Tracker](#), which warned of increased violence in Thi Qar during the preceding four weeks.

In **Palestine**, the arrest of two suspected Hamas affiliates sparked clashes between Palestinian security forces and rioters last week. The clashes took place after Palestinian security forces arrested two Palestinians in Nablus city, including a high-ranking member of the Hamas Movement, allegedly at Israel's request ([Times of Israel, 20 September 2022](#)). Such operations by Palestinian security forces are rare as they have a high potential to trigger community discontent and involve coordination with Israeli counterparts ([France 24, 20 September 2022](#)). A Palestinian bystander was killed during the clashes. In Jenin city, unidentified gunmen opened fire at a building belonging to the Palestinian Authority, likely in retaliation for the arrest of the Hamas members ([Haaretz, 21 September 2022](#)). Meanwhile, a Palestinian stabbed Israeli settlers in Modiin Ilit settlement in the West Bank, injuring five settlers. Israeli security forces intervened and shot the attacker, killing him.

In **Israel**, an off-duty police officer shot and killed a Palestinian assailant after they attacked Israeli civilians. The attacker stabbed two Israelis and injured five others with pepper spray at an intersection in Modiin city before being shot dead.

Note: This dashboard automatically updates to cover the latest four weeks of data released by ACLED. Use the date filters to view data for the one-week period covered by this Regional Overview.



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